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PAK, NAQVI KEEP SUSPENSE ALIVE OVER WORLD CUP PARTICIPATION

After Bangladesh was removed from the event, PCB chair Mohsin Naqvi said the government will take final call about them playing the T20 WC

PCB KEEPING 'ALL OPTIONS' ON THE TABLE

After meeting Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Naqvi took to social media to confirm that final decision will be taken on Friday or Monday. "I had a productive meeting with the Prime Minister and briefed him on the ICC matter. He directed that we resolve it while keeping all options on the table," Naqvi posted on X.

OPT OUT OF WC OR BOYCOTT INDIA MATCH?

- This issue came about after Pakistan wanted to show solidarity to Bangladesh who were replaced by Scotland after requesting to shift their matches out of India.
- It is understood PM Sharif was briefed on multiple scenarios, including the possibility of boycotting just the India match

Feb 15

IS WHEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN ARE SCHEDULED TO PLAY IN COLOMBO

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Free trade deal with EU done, signing today

A successful India makes the world more stable, says EU chief Ursula von der Leyen

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

AFTER several false starts, negotiations for the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) concluded on Monday. A formal announcement will be made on Tuesday.

Confirming the development, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said: "Negotiations have been successfully concluded. The deal has been finalised."

Commerce ministry sources said while the pact will be announced on Tuesday, processes like legal scrubbing and ratification by EU member states could take another year.

The India-EU deal was closed in the presence of European Council President António Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who were in India as special guests for the Republic Day. "Their presence underscores the growing strength of the India-EU partnership and our commitment to shared values. The visit will add momentum to the deepening engagement and cooperation between India and Europe across diverse sectors," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a social media post.

Described as the 'mother of all deals' by the Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, the India-EU FTA will be signed after two decades of talks, which began in 2007. The talks were suspended in 2013 as both sides opted for certain protectionist measures. The negotiations were relaunched in June 2022.

"The European Union remains a vital economic & strategic partner for India, and we value our shared commitment to a mutually beneficial, ambitious India-EU FTA for the prosperity of our businesses and people," Goyal stated in his social media post.

Both sides will keep certain sensitive sectors out of the deal. India does not want to open up the dairy and agricultural sectors.

> **Negotiations have been successfully concluded. The deal has been finalised**
>
> Rajesh Agrawal, Commerce Secretary

"A successful India makes the world more stable, prosperous and secure. And we all benefit," Von der Leyen said. She even said that the engagement between India and the EU "will culminate tomorrow in the signature of our Security and Defence Partnership".

India has a trade surplus with the EU, which stood at $15 billion in FY2025, with exports of $75.9 billion against imports of $60.7 billion. The EU accounts for 17% of India's total goods exports and one-third of its IT services exports. Analysts say the FTA could boost India's exports to the region by over 50% in the next five years.

This is the fourth FTA India will be signing since 2025. Last year, it concluded FTAs with the UK, New Zealand and Oman.

PICS: PTI, SHEKHAR YADAV, KEVIN NASHON

From L: President Droupadi Murmu, President of European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and PM Narendra Modi after attending the 77th Republic Day parade in Delhi; IAF flypast in Operation Sindoor format comprising 2 MiG-29, 2 Rafale, 2 Su-30MKI and 1 Jaguar; Students perform in Bengaluru on Monday

New-age arsenal on display at R-Day parade

India-China relations have continued to improve and develop, aligning with interests of both countries and their people, and are of great significance for promoting world peace

Xi Jinping, China President

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to people of India on your 77th Republic Day. US-India share a historic bond as the world's oldest and largest democracies

Donald Trump, US President

JAVARIA RANA @ New Delhi

THE 77th Republic Day parade at Kartavya Path on Monday brought Operation Sindoor and India's military might to the forefront with patriotic commemoration under the 'Vande Mataram' theme. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President António Costa attended as chief guests, marking the first collective participation of the European Union leadership at India's national celebrations.

Cultural and historical elements linked to the Independence struggle were reflected in tableaux from different states along the Kartavya Path, as the official theme was '150 Years of Vande Mataram'.

The parade featured a European Union defence contingent as well, with four flag bearers on three vehicles carrying flags of the European Union, the EU Military Staff and EU naval missions Operation Atalanta and Operation Aspides, respectively.

The tri-services tableau, "Operation Sindoor: Victory Through Jointness," was a standout which recreated the strike at Muridke terror camp in Pakistan destroyed by the Indian Armed Forces on May 7 last year. It also showcased the S-400 anti-missile system used in Operation Sindoor, HAROP loitering munitions, Rafale jets with SCALP missiles, and a Su-30 MKI launching BrahMos at hardened shelters.

In a first, the military columns were presented in a phased "battle array", with ground and aerial combat elements displayed in a sequence intended to reflect contemporary battlefield deployment.

The IAF staged a 29-aircraft flypast, led by the new 'Sindoor' formation, comprising Rafale, Su-30 MKI, MiG-29 and Jaguar that were deployed during the four-day clash with Pakistan.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation showcased its Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile, dubbed the "carrier killer", for the first time. The system incorporates the novel hypersonic glide vehicle technology.

The display also featured major strike and air defence systems, including the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile and the Akash Medium Range Surface to Air Missile.

A total of 30 tableaux participated in the parade.

India, Canada work on March visit of PM Carney to push trade talks

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA and Canada are working to finalise a visit by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to New Delhi in March, as both sides seek to accelerate negotiations on a bilateral trade deal.

The visit would mark the next phase in warming ties between the two countries, which have moved to restart talks on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) after a diplomatic impasse.

New Delhi and Ottawa are in talks to finalise the terms of reference for the CEPA negotiations, which aim to double bilateral trade to $50 billion by

2030, sources said. The push for a CEPA has gained urgency amid rising trade tensions with the United States.

India is currently subject to 50% US tariffs on certain goods, while Canada faces 35% levy under measures imposed by the Trump administration. Against this backdrop, New Delhi has sought to diversify export markets and expand trade agreements beyond US.

The two sides are also looking to deepen cooperation in the civilian nuclear sector, and India is exploring increased investment from Canadian pension funds.

Carney's remarks at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos are widely seen as Canada's shifting strategic posture. He said Canada was pursuing new trade and security partnerships with countries including India, Qatar, Thailand, as well as Mercosur and ASEAN. Ties with Canada have substantially improved since Carney became PM last year.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot attend the 77th Republic Day celebrations at Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw Parade Ground in Bengaluru on Monday | KEVIN NASHON

Guv: People must elect those with understanding of Statute

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

DAYS after uneasy developments between the Karnataka government and the Lok Bhavan, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, in his Republic Day speech on Monday, said the most-important task before the people is to elect representatives who work with an understanding of the core spirit of the Constitution.

"The factors that influence the functioning of the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary are the people of the country and the political parties they chose as instruments to fulfill their aspirations. The most important task before them is to elect representatives who work with an understanding of the core spirit of the Constitution and to preserve democracy through the continuous questioning and dialogue," Gehlot said, referring to what Mahatma Gandhi had emphasised.

The Governor had objected to the state government's attack on the Central government's move to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA) with Viksit Bharat Guarantee Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (VB-GRAM G). In his address to the joint legislature on Thursday, Gehlot had read just three lines from the speech provided by the state government. P5

Kuki village torched in fresh Manipur violence

A building burns after it was set on fire in Manipur's K Songlung village | x

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

FRESH violence erupted in Manipur on Monday with a Naga rebel group burning down several houses belonging to members of the Kuki community in Kangpokpi district.

Claiming responsibility for the arson attack at K Songlung (II) village, the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) said it was targeting illegal poppy cultivation, narcotics trafficking and encroachment of the territory of the Zeliangrong Inpui Naga people by illegal immigrants.

Reacting to the incident, the Kuki-Zo organisation Committee on Tribal Unity threatened to shut down two national highways from midnight on January 27 if the authorities failed to apprehend the perpetrators within 24 hours.

EXPRESS READ

Cong, Oppn to stage protests today

Bengaluru: The Congress will take out a 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' rally to protest against the VB-G RAM G Act, while the BJP and JDS will organise a protest against the Congress legislators allegedly insulting Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Tuesday | P4

Rajeev Gowda arrested from Kerala

Chikkaballapur: Congress leader Rajeev Gowda, who was accused of threatening Sidlaghatta Municipal Commissioner Amrutha, was arrested from Kerala, sources said on Monday. He had absconded after two separate cases were filed against him | P4

Two tourists die as boat capsizes in Udupi

Udupi: Two tourists died after a boat carrying 14 passengers capsized near Kodi Bengre delta beach in Udupi district on Monday. Police said not all tourists were wearing safety jackets. They were employees of a call centre and came from Saraswatipuram in Mysuru | P5

EARLY ONSET

Summer temp may be 1-4°C above norm this yr

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

Karnataka could experience a severe summer this year, with temperatures going up by nearly 3 degrees Celsius more than the normal in certain pockets. Also, it could be an early summer as temperatures are expected to start going up from February 15, experts said.

The state normally experiences summer between March and May with hot and humid conditions, and temperatures hovering between 28 degrees Celsius and 43 degrees Celsius. While the coastal region, including Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada districts, experience high humidity, north-interior regions face extreme heat. Bengaluru and other parts in south-interior Karnataka could face temperatures around 1 degree Celsius above normal, while coastal and north Karnataka regions may experience 2 degrees Celsius or more. In some extreme cases, it could even go up by 4 degrees Celsius above normal.

GS Srinivasa Reddy, former Director, Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), told *TNIE* that

a preliminary report by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) stated that summer temperatures will be above normal for the entire country. "We expect similar conditions in Karnataka, with temperatures going 1-2 degrees Celsius above normal in certain pockets, especially in the Kalyan-Karnataka region, like Raichur, Ballari, Yadgir and Kalaburagi and also a few places in Kittur-Karnataka," he said.

Other experts said the state could witness very less rainfall in January and February, around 8 mm in March and 36 mm in April. "As heat intensifies, there will be thunderstorm activities, which could occur in early March, as we expect early summer that could set in by the second week of February," said an officer from the Karnataka State Disaster Management. P7

After pilots complain, HAL revokes nod to switch on floodlights at KGA

ANUBHAB ROY @ Bengaluru

THE Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) has revoked the approval given to operate floodlights at night at the Karnataka Golf Association (KGA) as they are posing a risk to aircraft landing at the HAL Airport. Despite HAL warning KGA multiple times, the harsh, bright lights were not being switched off and pilots had complained to HAL about difficulty in operating their aircraft.

HAL first communicated to KGA on January 12, asking it to

switch off the floodlights, citing that non-compliance would be a violation of Section 66 of the Aircraft Rules of 1937, Part 1 - Series 4 of the Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs), and the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam (Indian Aircraft Act) of 2024.

As per the letter written by HAL General Manager V Sri Krishna Prasad to KGA Honorary Secretary Madhur Sood on January 20, KGA not only failed to comply with the directions sent on January 12, but also disregarded repeated instructions sent on January 16 and 17 by keeping the floodlights on. As pilots had continued to complain to HAL about the harsh lights, the approval was withdrawn.

Sood told *TNIE*, "The floodlights will not be on today (January 26)", but declined to comment further, adding that he was out of station. P7